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(54) **INTEGRATED OPTICAL CIRCUIT AND METHOD FOR MEASURING CURRENT AS WELL AS SENSOR MODULE AND MEASURING DEVICE**

USPC 324/96
See application file for complete search history.

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(57) **ABSTRACT**

In an integrated optical circuit, light from a light source is polarized and coupled to a first and second strip waveguide. A waveguide coupling element couples the two optical signals from the two strip waveguides to different polarization modes of an optical fiber line. The optical fiber line is connected to a measuring head, which reflects the optical signal and in which a phase difference between the two optical partial signals is modulated in a magnetic field. In the waveguide coupling element, the reflected signal is split into two optical partial signals having the same polarization and the phase difference between the two partial signals is determined. A phase modulator device provides for closed-loop operation. Compared to fiber-optical concepts, the number of splices is reduced.

20 Claims, 9 Drawing Sheets

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G01R 15/24 (2006.01)

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CPC **G01R 15/246** (2013.01)

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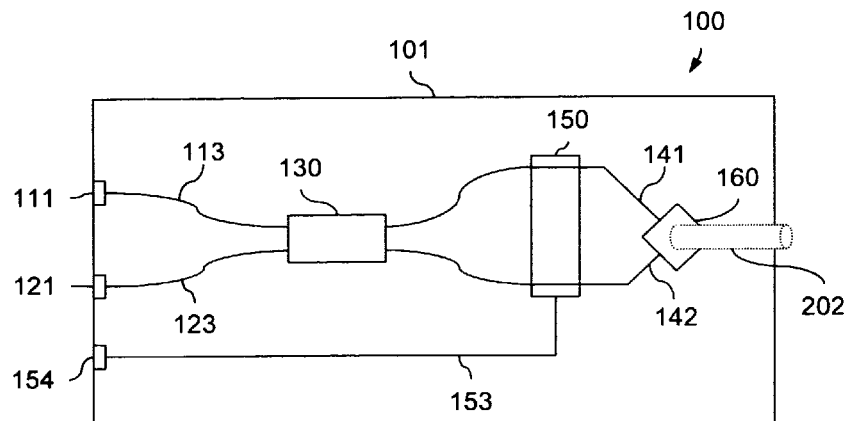


Fig. 1A

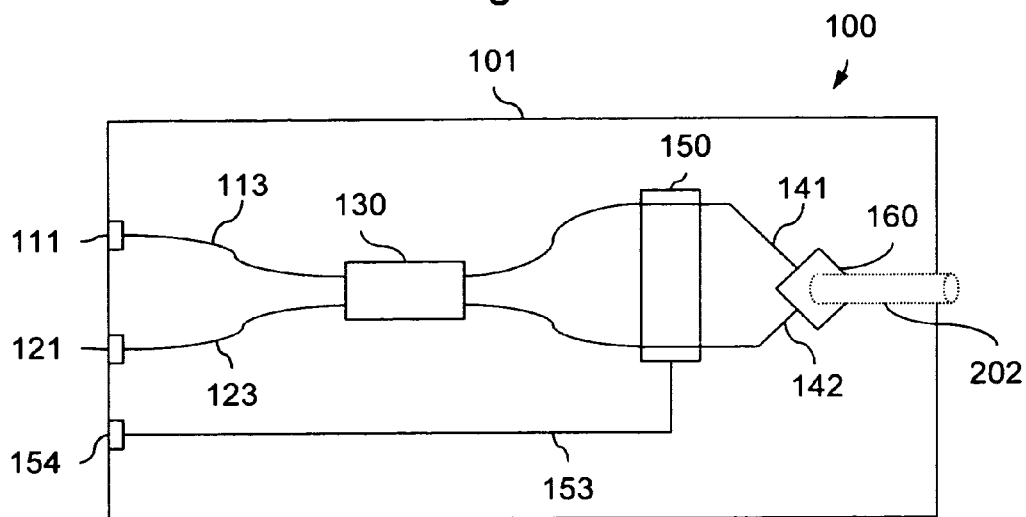


Fig. 1B

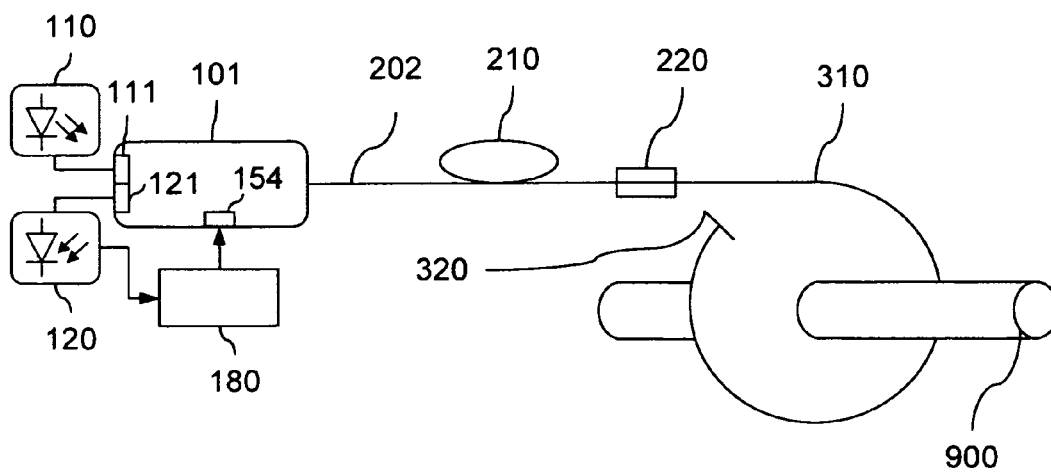


Fig. 2A

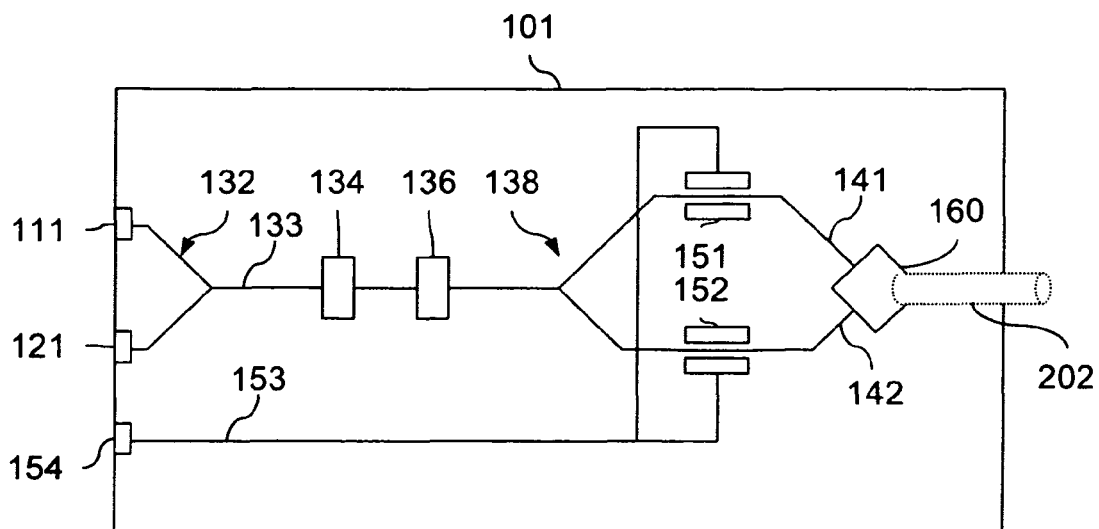


Fig. 2B

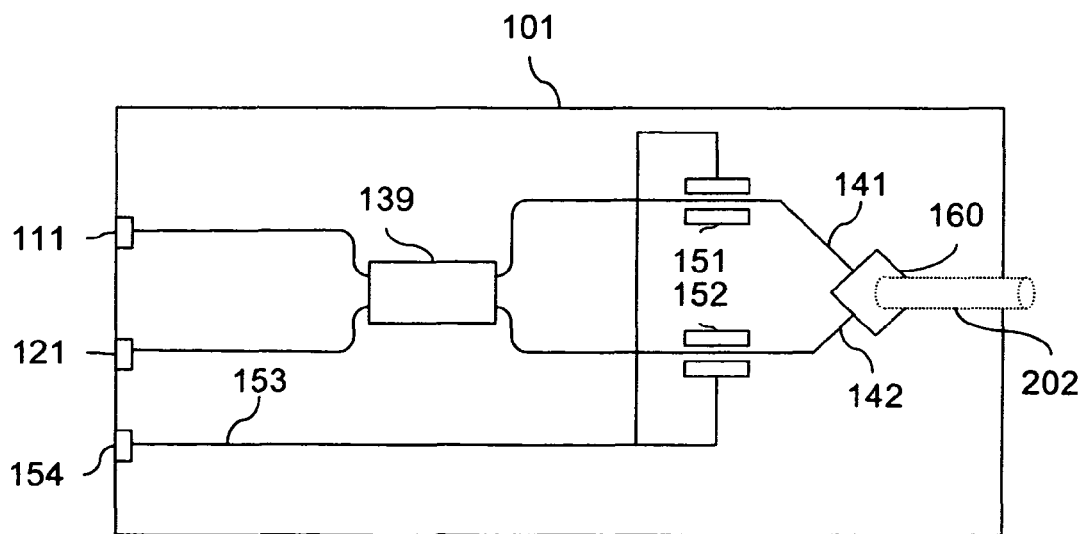


Fig. 3

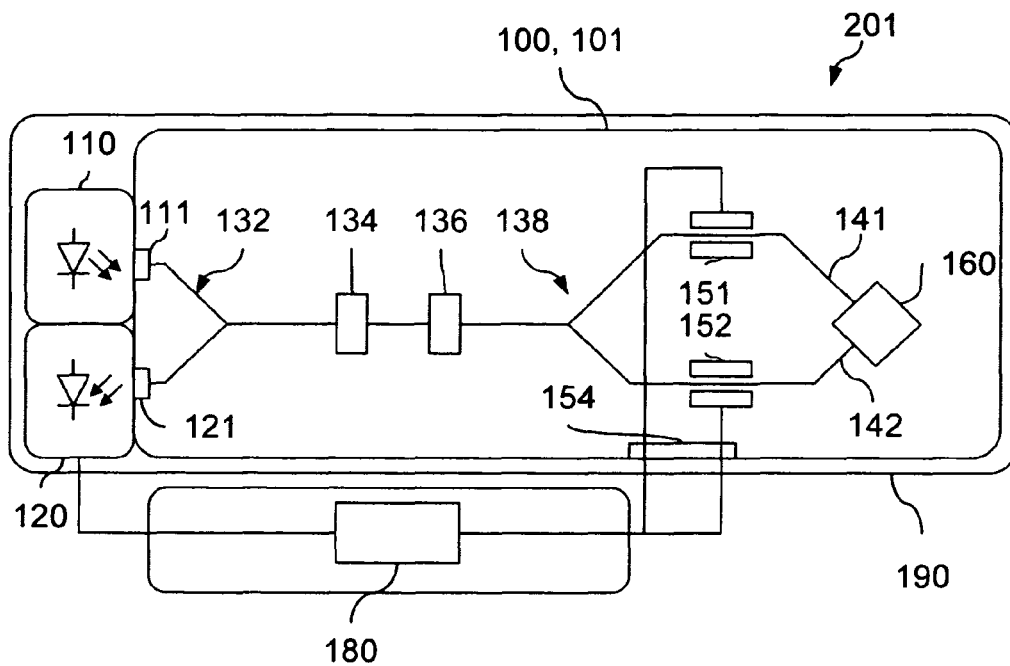


Fig. 4

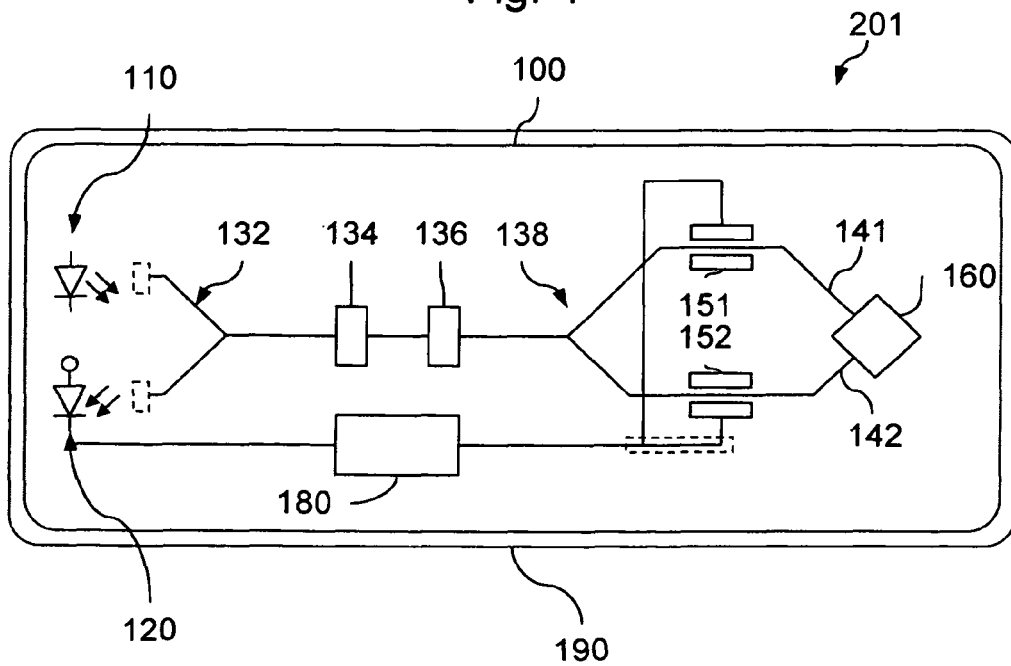


Fig. 5A

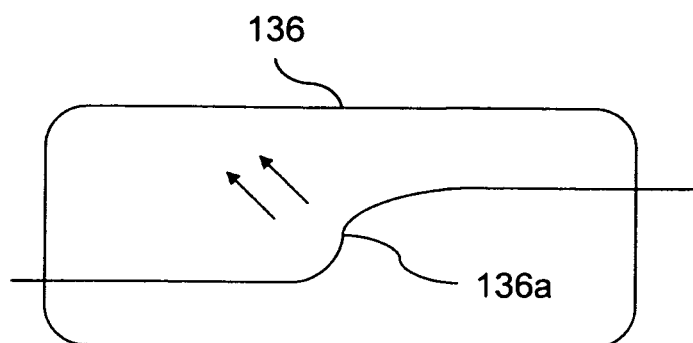


Fig. 5B

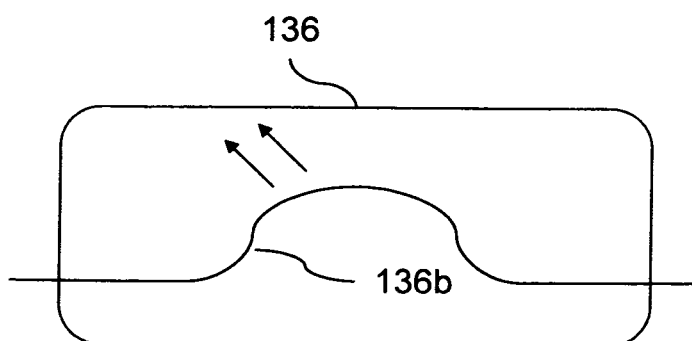


Fig. 5C

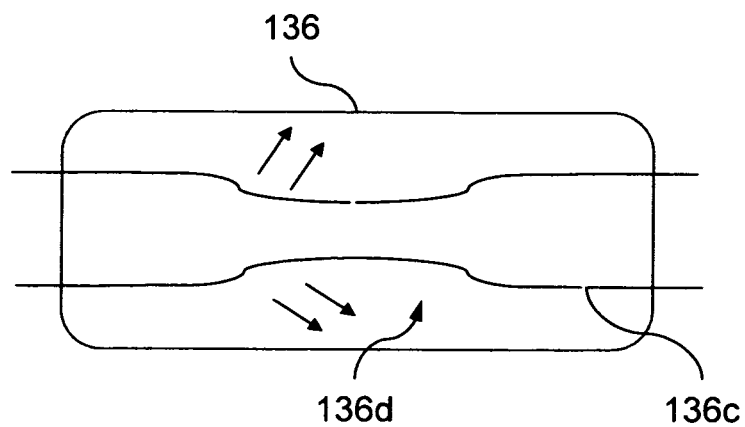


Fig. 5D

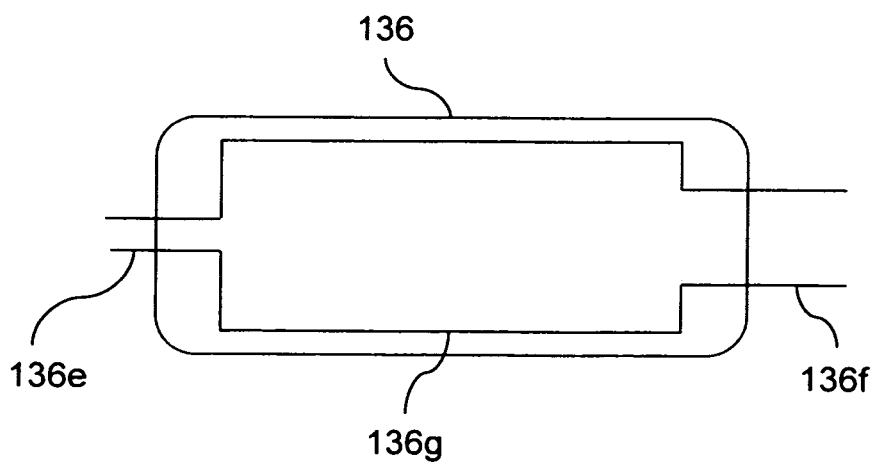


Fig. 6

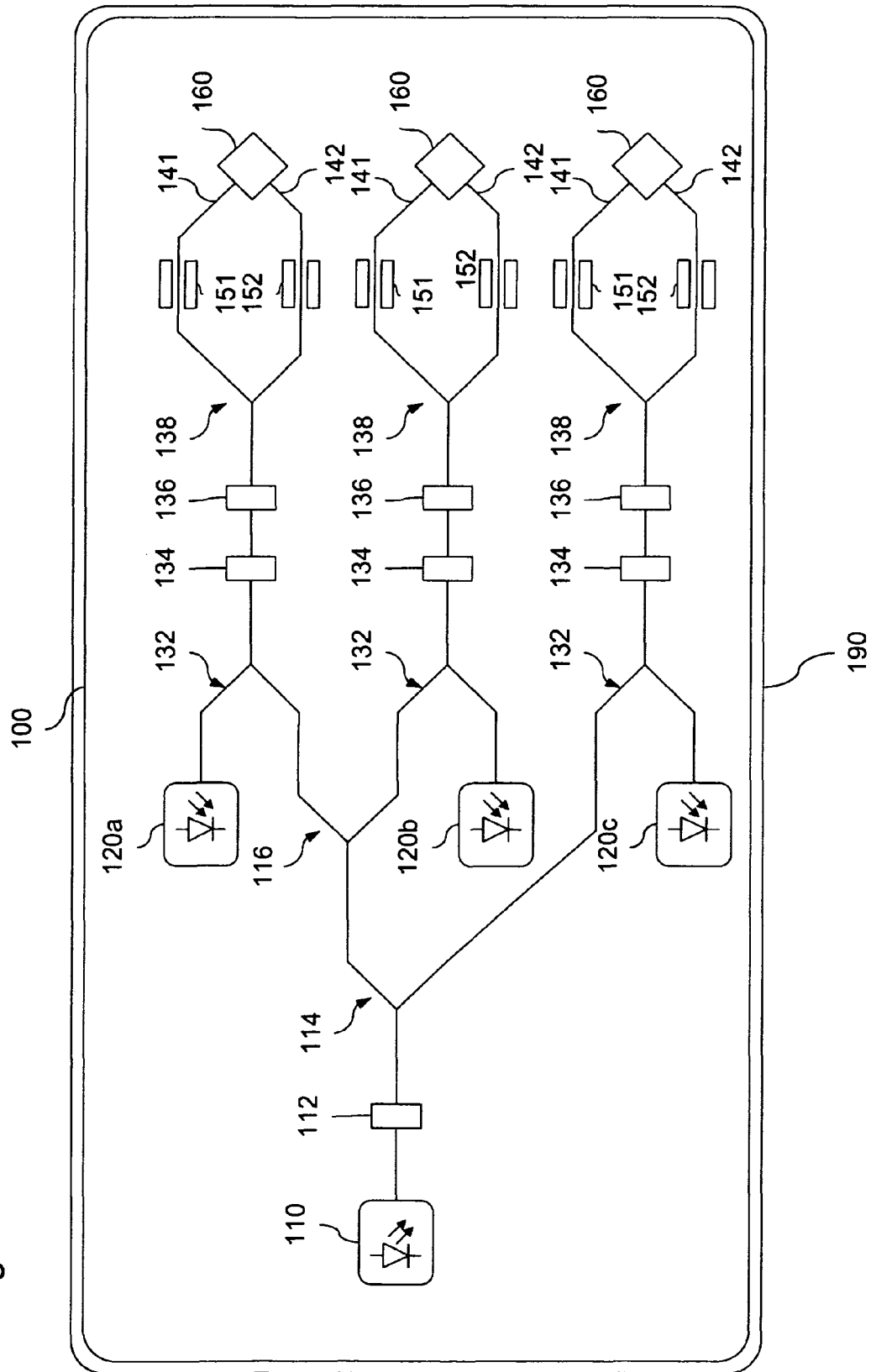


Fig. 7

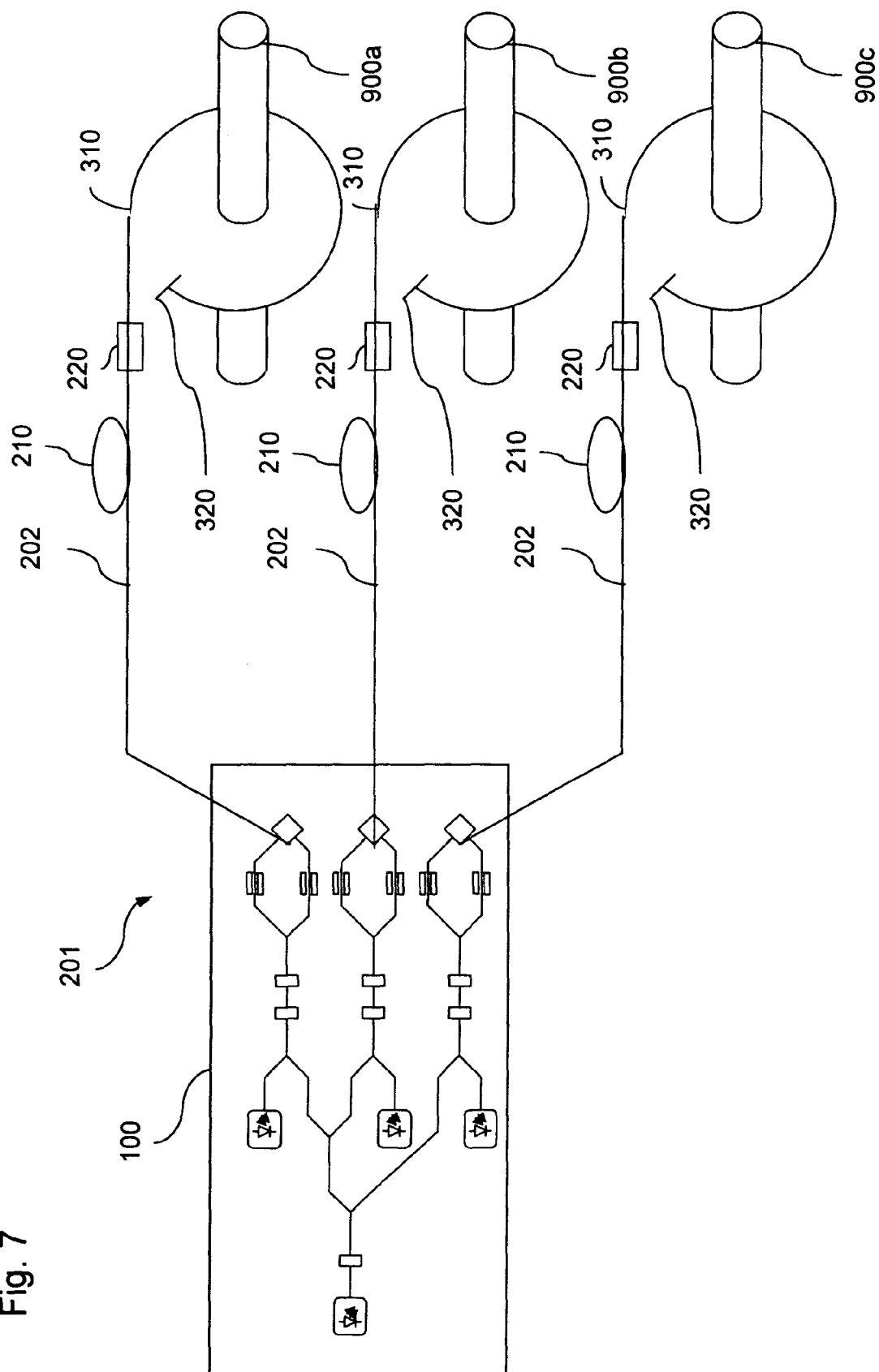


Fig. 8

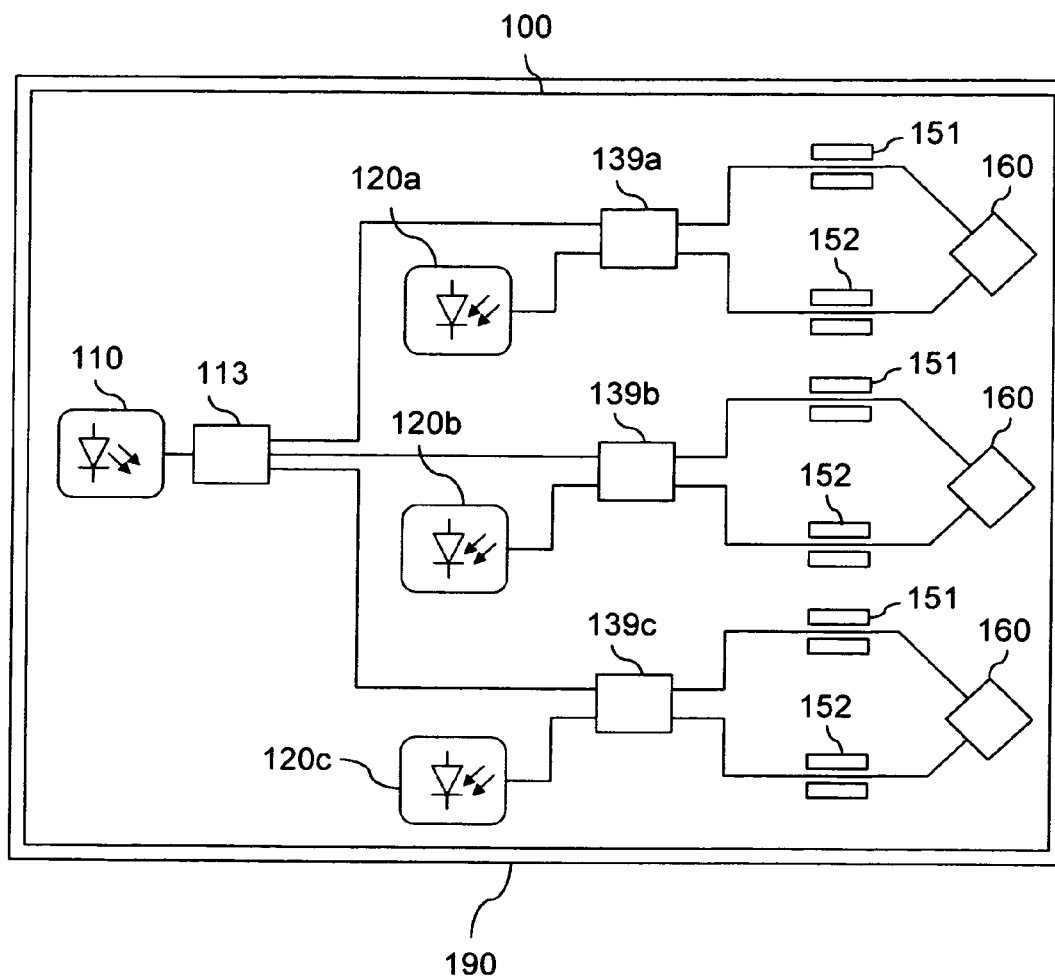
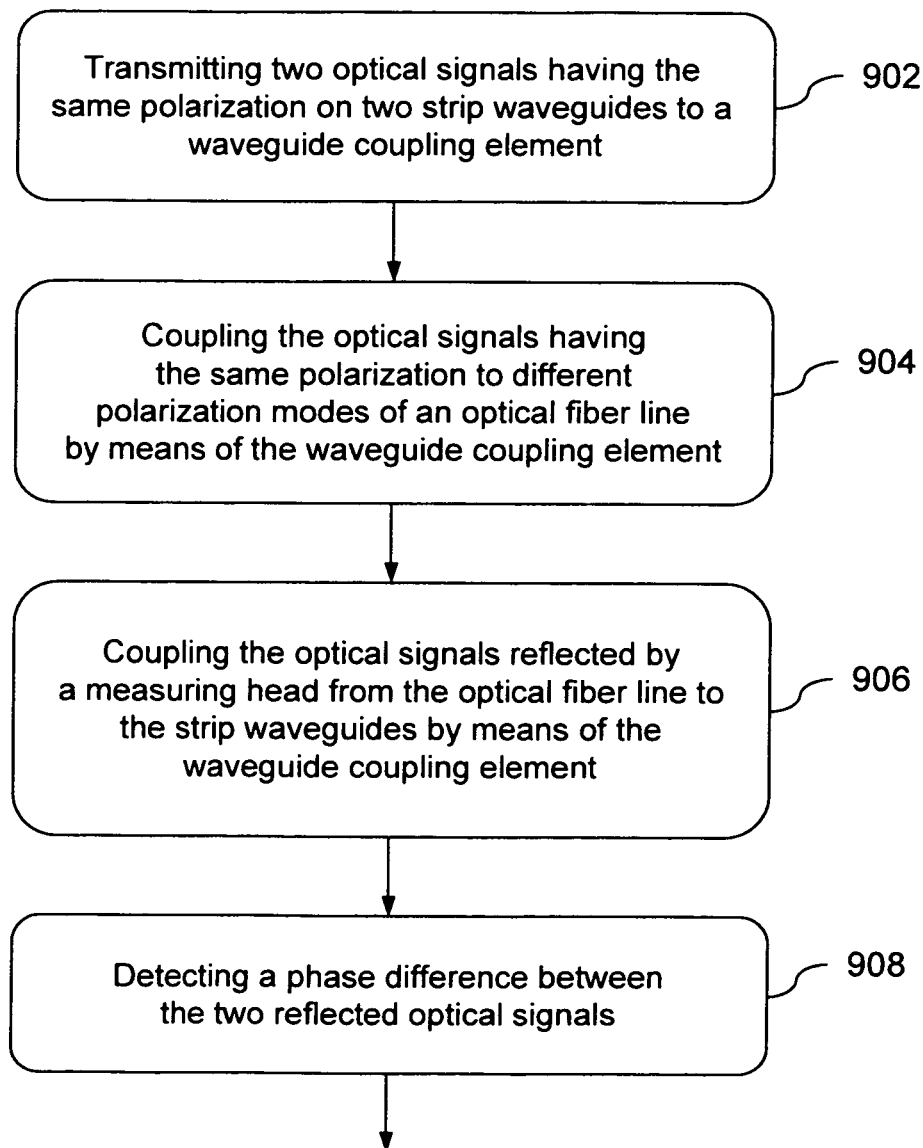


Fig. 9



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INTEGRATED OPTICAL CIRCUIT AND METHOD FOR MEASURING CURRENT AS WELL AS SENSOR MODULE AND MEASURING DEVICE

BACKGROUND

1. Field of the Invention

The present invention relates to an integrated optical circuit for measuring current based on the Faraday effect, a sensor module comprising such an integrated optical circuit and a measuring device. It further relates to a method for measuring current by an integrated optical circuit.

2. Description of the Prior Art

Fiber-optical current sensors (FOCS) detect the current through a conductor by means of an optical fiber wound around the conductor. The magnetic field surrounding the conductor rotates the oscillation plane of linearly polarized light or causes a phase shift between circular polarization modes, orthogonal to one another, of a light beam, guided through the optical fiber. The amount of the phase shift between the polarization modes caused by the electric current is a measure of the intensity of current in the conductor.

In a fiber-optical current sensor, a light beam generated by a light source is guided to a polarizer via a directional coupler and linearly polarized by the polarizer. The polarized light is coupled at 45 degrees with respect to the polarization axes of a polarization maintaining fiber by a fiber splice so that two different polarization modes comprising approximately the same amplitude are guided in parallel in the same fiber. The two polarization modes are "partial light beams" of a primary light beam. They are guided in parallel, comprising a defined polarization and in each case use another optical light path in the polarization maintaining fiber. The two polarization modes pass through a twin refraction phase modulator, which adjusts a non-reciprocal phase shift between the two polarization modes. A $\lambda/4$ phase shifter converts the linearly polarized light into circularly polarized light, to enhance the Faraday effect. The light then passes through a fiber coil, which winds around the conductor carrying the current to be measured, and is reflected in a reflector. When a current flows in the conductor, the Faraday effect between the two circularly polarized polarization modes causes a phase shift whose value is proportional to the current in the conductor. The returning polarization modes are brought together at the fiber splice and guided via the polarizer and the directional coupler to a detector, on which the two polarization modes interfere. The phase shift is reflected in a shift of the interference pattern, which is evaluated.

SUMMARY AND OBJECTS OF THE INVENTION

It is an object of the present invention to provide a measuring arrangement for measuring current based on the Faraday effect, which can be produced in a cost-efficient manner.

The invention addresses the preceding object and others by providing, in a first aspect, an integrated optical circuit for measuring current on the basis of the Faraday effect.

The circuit comprises at least one optical module that encompasses first and second strip waveguides, a waveguide coupling element suitable for coupling a first optical signal from the first strip waveguide and a second optical signal from the second strip waveguide to an optical fiber line so that the same polarization modes of the first and second optical signal are coupled to different polarization modes of the optical fiber

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line while optical signals from the optical fiber line are coupled to the first and second strip waveguide as a function of the polarization mode.

In a second aspect, the invention provides a method for measuring current on the basis of the Faraday effect by an integrated optical circuit. The steps of the method include transmitting a first optical signal via a first strip waveguide and a second optical signal via a second strip waveguide to a waveguide coupling element, with the first and the second optical signal having the same polarization mode.

The first and the second optical signal are coupled to an optical fiber line of a measuring head by a waveguide coupling element wherein the first and the second optical signal are coupled to different polarization modes of the optical fiber line. An optical signal, which is reflected by the measuring head, comprising two partial signals having a different polarization from the optical fiber line is coupled to the first and second strip waveguide in accordance with the polarization mode. A phase difference between the two optical signals, which are coupled on the first and second strip waveguide is detected by means of the optical fiber line.

The foregoing features of the invention will become further apparent from the detailed description that follows. Such description is accompanied by a set of drawing figures. Numerals of the figures, corresponding to those of the written description, point to the features of the invention with like numerals referring to like features of the invention throughout.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. 1A is a schematic top view of an optical module of an integrated optical circuit.

FIG. 1B is a schematic illustration of a device for measuring a current based on the Faraday effect by an integrated optical circuit comprising the optical module of FIG. 1A.

FIG. 2A is a schematic top view of an integrated optical circuit comprising an optical module according to an embodiment of the invention comprising waveguide combining and waveguide branching elements.

FIG. 2B is a schematic top view of an integrated optical circuit according to an embodiment of the invention comprising an optical module including a 2:2 directional coupling element.

FIG. 3 is a schematic top view of a sensor module comprising an integrated optical circuit, a light source, a detector element and an evaluation and control unit according to a hybrid embodiment.

FIG. 4 is a schematic top view of a sensor module comprising an integrated optical circuit, in the case of which light source, detector element and evaluation and control unit are monolithically integrated.

FIG. 5A is a schematic top view of a spatial filter element for an integrated optical circuit according to an embodiment comprising a simple bend.

FIG. 5B is a schematic top view of a spatial filter element according to an embodiment comprising a double bend.

FIG. 5C is a schematic top view of a spatial filter element according to an embodiment comprising a cross section constriction of a strip waveguide.

FIG. 5D is a schematic top view of a spatial filter element according to an embodiment comprising different waveguide geometries.

FIG. 6 is a schematic top view of an integrated optical circuit comprising three optical modules for measuring three-phase currents.

FIG. 7 is a schematic illustration of a measuring device for measuring three-phase currents by means of the integrated optical circuit according to FIG. 6.

FIG. 8 is a schematic top view of an integrated optical circuit comprising a 1:3 coupler and three 2:2 couplers for measuring three-phase currents.

FIG. 9 is a simplified flowchart of a method for operating a measuring device.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

FIG. 1A is an integrated optical circuit **100** for measuring current based on the Faraday effect. The circuit **100** encompasses one or a plurality of measuring modules **101**, each comprising a first strip waveguide **141** and a second strip waveguide **142**. According to one embodiment, the material of the strip waveguides **141**, **142** is polarization maintaining. In another embodiment, the material of the strip waveguides **141**, **142** is a highly anisotropic, polarizing material. For example, the material of the strip waveguides **141**, **142** can be a semiconductor material, e.g. GaAs or silicon.

The strip waveguides **141**, **142** can in each case be embodied completely or partially as supported waveguides that rest on a substrate comprising a lower refractive index, as buried strip waveguides integrated into a substrate comprising a lower refractive index, as slotted waveguide or as nano rib waveguide. The underlying substrate of the strip waveguides **141**, **142** is, for example, monocrystalline silicon, silicon dioxide or glass. The width of the strip waveguides **141**, **142** is 100 micrometers or less. According to an embodiment, their widths are between equal to or less than the wavelength of the light guided in them. For example, the width of the strip waveguides **141**, **142** is maximally 1 micrometer or 300 nm, at least in sections.

The integrated optical circuit **100** further includes a waveguide coupling element **160**. It couples the light signal, which is brought close via the first strip waveguide **141** as well as via the second strip waveguide **142**, to an optical fiber line **202**. The waveguide coupling element **160** thereby couples the two light signals to different polarization modes of the optical fiber line **202**. Vice versa, it couples two orthogonal polarization modes of a light beam, which is brought close via the optical fiber line **202**, onto either the first strip waveguide **141** or the second strip waveguide **142** as a function of polarization direction. For example, the waveguide coupling element **160** is a decoupling grid and a front surface of the optical fiber line **202** is arranged above the decoupling grid, to be oriented substantially parallel to the grid surface. For example, the decoupling grid couples the two optical signals, which are brought close via the two strip waveguides **141**, **142**, into orthogonal linear polarization states of the optical fiber line **202**. For example, the decoupling grid is a two-dimensional grid in an overlapping area of the first and of the second strip waveguide **141**, **142**.

The dimensions of the decoupling grid can be adapted to the cross section of the fiber line. For example, the decoupling grid can comprise a surface of less than 1 mm². The edge length can be between several 10 and several 100 micrometers. The two strip waveguides **141**, **142** intersect one another, for example in the decoupling grid, at an angle of 90 degrees. In a transition section, the width of the strip waveguides **141**, **142** can thereby be adapted to the edge length of the decoupling grid either steadily or linearly, based on a width of several ten or hundred nanometers. According to an embodiment, the grid is etched into a silicon layer, which has a thickness of several 10 to several 100 nm that rests on a SiO₂

layer. For example, the grid comprises a regular field of depressions comprising a depth of 90 nm and a diameter of the depressions of approximately 300 nm with a grid period of 580 nm.

The integrated optical circuit **100** further comprises a phase modulator device **150**, via which a phase difference between the two light signals having the same polarization in the first and in the second strip waveguide **141**, **142** can be controlled. To control the phase modulator device **150**, the optical module **101** encompasses one or a plurality of electric lines **153** that are guided between an electric interface **154** of the optical module **101** and the phase modulator device **150**.

A directional coupling element **130** branches the two optical light signals, which are guided to the optical fiber line **202** via the two strip waveguides **141**, **142**, from a common optical input signal and further guides the two optical partial signals, which are received by the optical fiber line **202**, together to a common output signal. A further strip waveguide **113** connects the directional coupling element **130** to an input gate **111**, via which the optical input signal is coupled into the optical module **101**. The optical output signal is output via an output gate **121**, which is connected to the directional coupling element **130** via a further strip waveguide **123**.

The phase modulator device **150** can be an electro-optical phase modulator of the push-pull type, for example. According to an embodiment, the phase modulator device **150** comprises exactly one modulator unit in each of the two optical signal paths comprising the first and second strip waveguides **141**, **142**. Due to the fact that the phase modulator device **150** finally only adjusts the phase difference between the two optical signals in the two optical signal paths, which are defined by the first and second strip wave conductor **141**, **142**, the phase modulator device **150** comprises exactly one modulator unit in one of the two optical signal paths in another embodiment. Each modulator unit can consist of one piece. According to an embodiment, at least one of the modulator units is segmented, wherein the segments can be controlled independent from one another. For example, one of the segments can be used to adjust a fixed phase offset and thus a certain operating point, while a further segment mainly or exclusively serves for high-frequency modulation of the measuring signal. According to an embodiment, a plurality of segments of a modulator unit is embodied in the form of a digital phase modulator (optical DA converter).

For example, the directional coupling element **130** is an integrated optical 2:2 directional coupler comprising a phase difference of 90° between the two optical signals on the output side. The directional coupling element **130** feeds an optical input signal on a first gate of a first gate pair to a first or second gate of a second gate pair and feeds optical signals at the gates of the second gate pair to the second gate of the first gate pair. In the optical module **101**, the directional coupling element **130** guides an optical input signal, which is fed at the input gate **111**, to the first and second strip waveguide **141**, **142**. In addition, the directional coupling element **130** couples the optical partial signals, which are received by the optical fiber line **202** and which are coupled to the first and second strip waveguides **141**, **142**, to the strip waveguide **123**, which is connected to the output gate **121** of the optical module **101**.

A first optical signal path comprising the first strip waveguide **141** between the first gate of the second gate pair of the directional coupling element **130** and the waveguide coupling element **160** covers a different optical distance than the second optical signal path comprising the second strip waveguide **142** between the second gate of the second gate

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pair of the directional coupling element **130** and the waveguide coupling element **160**. The optical path difference has the effect that an interference contrast of the optical signals in the waveguide coupling element **160** as compared to an imaginary embodiment comprising identical distances is reduced by at least 50%, for example 90% of more or is almost 0. The optical path difference follows from the bandwidth of the optical signal and the effective refractive index of the strip waveguide. According to an exemplary embodiment for a Si waveguide comprising an effective refractive index of approximately 3 and a wavelength difference $\Delta\lambda$ of 30 nm with a significant wavelength of 1500 nm, the optical path difference is approximately 100 μm .

The number of necessary fiber splices and, thus, the number of potential polarization cross coupling points, which can lead to inaccuracies in the sensor, can be reduced considerably with the integrated optical circuit **100**. In addition, the integrated optical circuit **100** can be produced in a comparatively simple manner.

FIG. 1B shows a device for magnetic field measuring or for measuring a current through a line **900**, respectively, by means of the described integrated optical circuit comprising an optical module **101**. Light from a light source **110** is fed into an integrated optical circuit comprising an optical module **101** via the input gate **111**. The light is polarized in the optical circuit and coupled to two optical signal paths having different distances. The two partial signals are coupled to different polarization modes of an optical fiber line **202** by the two optical signal paths. Accordingly, the optical fiber line **202** guides an optical signal consisting of two partial signals comprising a different linear polarization and phase. The two polarization modes run via a delay element **210** to a quarter-wavelength plate **220**, which converts the two linearly polarized light waves into a left and a right circularly polarized light wave. The optical signal then passes through an optical fiber coil **310**, which wraps around a live conductor **900**. A reflector **320** at the end of the fiber coil **310** reflects the optical signal. The two circular polarization modes of the reflected signal are converted again into linearly polarized polarization modes in the quarter-wave length plate **220** and are coupled into the optical module **101** via the optical fiber line **202**. From the two polarization modes, the optical module **101** creates two optical partial signals having the same polarization mode, combines them and guides the combination signal comprising the two optical partial signals to a detector element **120** that is coupled to the output gate **121** of the optical module **101**. The detector element **126** registers the phase difference between the two optical partial signals. An evaluation and control unit **180** evaluates a phase difference between the two partial signals to control a phase modulation device in the optical module **101** via an electric interface **154** such that the phase difference between the two optical partial signals does not deviate from a predetermined value.

FIG. 2A refers to an embodiment, in which the directional coupling element comprises a waveguide combining element **132** and a waveguide branching element **138**. The waveguide combining element **132** guides optical signals at the first and second gate of the first gate pair to a third strip waveguide **133** and an optical signal from the third strip waveguide **133** to the second gate of the first gate pair. The waveguide branching element **138** couples the signal from the third strip waveguide **133** in equal parts to the first and second optical signal path comprising the first and second strip waveguides **141**, **142** or couples the optical partial signals received by the optical fiber line **202** from the first and second optical signal path to the third strip waveguide **133**, respectively. For example, the waveguide combining element **132** as well as the waveguide

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branching element **138** is Y-like strip structures in the technology of the strip waveguides **141**, **142**, **133** that are provided in the optical module **101**.

According to an embodiment based on polarization maintaining strip waveguides and in response to feeding non-polarized light into the optical module **101**, the directional coupling element can encompass a polarization element **134** that polarizes light linearly. According to an embodiment, the polarization element **134** is an integrated optical polarizer (e.g. of the Plasmon type) wherein provision is made via a silicon nano-waveguide for a thin layer system consisting of at least one dielectric layer and a metal layer. By exciting a Plasmon in the metal layer, a polarization mode guided in the silicon nano-waveguide is quasi absorbed. According to another embodiment, the polarization element **134** is a hybrid-integrated polarizer, for instance a thin layer polarizer, for example a glass polarizer comprising a thickness of between 10 and several 100 μm , which is arranged in a trench etched into the substrate, e.g. a silicon substrate. In the event that polarized light is already fed into the optical module **101** or the strip waveguides are themselves polarizing, the polarization element **134** is no longer necessary. For example, integrated silicon nano-waveguides encompass a high polarization dependency, that is, the two linearly polarized individual modes have highly different expansion constants so that the polarization states are highly decoupled from one another. For example, the silicon nano-waveguides can be designed such that only one of the two linearly polarized individual modes are capable of expanding at all, so that the integrated silicon nano-waveguide itself acts as polarizer. The polarizing effect of the silicon nano-waveguide or the polarization element **134**, respectively, insure that only a linear polarization is guided and modulated in the interferometer.

The optical module **101** can encompass a spatial filter element **136**, which is arranged in the optical path between the waveguide combining element **132** and the waveguide branching element **138**. The spatial filter element **136** suppresses non-reciprocal optical paths that are created in the otherwise-reciprocal integrated optical interferometer by exciting a second or higher waveguide mode. Such a second waveguide mode can be excited, for example, in the waveguide branching element **138**. In response to a conventional fiber-optical realization of the interferometer, the corresponding optical fiber encompasses a minimum length, in the case of which such a higher mode emits completely. In response to the realization in an integrated optical circuit, however, the length of the corresponding section of the strip waveguide is not sufficient. Rather, an embodiment provides a spatial filter element **136** between the waveguide combining element **132** and the waveguide branching element **138**.

In the illustrated embodiment, the optical module **101** encompasses a first modulator unit **151**, which is effective in a first optical path comprising the first strip waveguide **141**, and a second modulator unit **152**, which is effective in a second optical path comprising the second strip waveguide **142**.

FIG. 2B illustrates an embodiment comprising a 2:2 directional coupler **139** as directional coupling element. According to an embodiment, the strip waveguides of the integrated optical circuit **100** are designed such that only one of the two linearly polarized individual modes can expand, as is the case in a highly anisotropic waveguide, for example. The independent modes can be a TE-mode, for example, in which case the electric field is oriented substantially parallel to the substrate plane. Such a solution does not require an integrated optical polarizer. The light, which is emitted by a light source and fed via the input gate **111**, is divided onto two arms of an inter-

ferometer arrangement by means of the 2:2 directional coupler **139**. In the interferometer arrangement, a phase modulator device comprising two module units **151**, **152** modulates the phase difference between the optical signals in the two arms. The two optical signals are coupled into orthogonal, linear polarization states of an optical fiber line **202** by a waveguide coupling element **160**.

FIG. 3 illustrates a sensor module **201** comprising an integrated optical circuit **100**, which only comprises an optical module **101**. The light emitted by a light source **110** is coupled into the optical module **101** of the integrated optical circuit **100** via an input gate **111**, guided to a polarization element **134** by means of a waveguide combining element **132**, polarized linearly at that location and distributed onto two asymmetrical strip waveguides **141**, **142** by means of a waveguide branching element **138**, wherein the waveguide branching element **138** can generate a first phase difference between the optical signals guided in the two strip waveguides **141**, **142**. The two strip waveguides **141**, **142** are brought together in a waveguide coupling element **160**, which feeds the two optical signals, which are guided in the two strip waveguides **141**, **142**, into an optical fiber line **202**, which is arranged above the waveguide coupling element **160** with a front side. The optical fiber line **202** is connected to a magnetic field-sensitive, fiber-optical sensor head, in which the optical signal, which is coupled into the optical fiber line **202**, is reflected, and in which the phase difference between the two polarization modes is changed as a function of the intensity of a magnetic field, to which the sensor head is subjected.

The optical signal reflected in the sensor head comprising the two polarization modes is coupled back to the two strip waveguides **141**, **142** via the waveguide coupling element **160**, wherein the one polarization mode is substantially coupled into the first strip waveguide **141** and the other polarization mode into the other strip waveguide **142**. Due to the fact that the waveguide coupling element **160** acts reciprocally, the change in the polarization direction in the second strip waveguide **142** is thereby reversed again. The two optical partial signals guided in the two strip waveguides **141**, **142** thus have the same polarization, but encompass a phase difference to one another, which includes information relating to the intensity of the magnetic field, to which the sensor head is subjected.

The waveguide branching element **138** guides the two optical partial signals together, wherein the spatial filter element **136** filters or emits, respectively, higher modes, which have been excited, e.g. by guiding the optical signals via the waveguide branching element **138**. The waveguide combining element **132** couples the two overlapping optical partial signals to an output gate **121** of the optical module **101**, to which an optical detector element **120** is coupled. An evaluation and control unit **180** determines the intensity of the magnetic field or that of a current that generates the magnetic field, respectively, from the displacement of an interference pattern that results from the overlap between the two phase-shifted optical partial signals.

According to an embodiment, the sensor module **201** is operated closed-loop, wherein the evaluation and control unit **180** controls a phase modulator device comprising modulator units **151**, **152** arranged between the waveguide branching element **138** and the waveguide coupling element **160** so that the phase difference determined in the optical detector element **120** does not deviate from a predetermined reference value. According to an embodiment, the evaluation and control unit **180** outputs electric signals for this purpose that are transmitted to an electric interface of the optical module **101**.

Electric lines connect the electric interface to the modulator units **151**, **152** in the optical module **101**.

The light source **110** is a hybrid SLD (super luminescent diode) chip, for example, which is produced separately and optically coupled to the integrated optical circuit **100**, for example, by front surface coupling of corresponding waveguide facets or by means of flip-chip assembly. The optical detector element **120**, together with the light source **110**, can be processed on a common chip and, together with the light source **110**, coupled to the integrated optical circuit **100**. The location of light source **110** and detector element **120** outside the integrated optical circuit **100** provides use of common light sources and detector elements. According to a further embodiment, only the detector element **120** is integrated on the integrated optical circuit **100**, e.g. on the basis of Ge or III-V, while the light source **110** is provided on a separately processed chip. Such embodiment reduces the assembly effort in response to the production, in particular when the integrated optical circuit encompasses a plurality of optical modules that are, in each case, assigned to different detector elements, but can be fed from the same light source.

The evaluation control electronics **180** for data processing can be integrated into the integrated optical circuit and can be embodied on a common substrate together with the strip waveguides and modulators. According to the embodiment shown in FIG. 3, the evaluation and control electronics **180** is realized on a separate silicon chip.

The sensor module **201** further comprises a thermoelectric element **190** (TEC, Peltier element) that is thermally coupled to the integrated optical circuit **100**. The thermoelectric element **190** holds the temperature of the integrated optical circuit **100** at a predetermined value. According to an embodiment, the thermoelectric element **190** also holds the temperature of the light source **110** or the temperature of light source **110** and detector element **120**, respectively, constant. The thermoelectric element **190** suppresses temperature-dependent polarization cross-couplings. In addition, a resulting phase shift can be held constant and can be calibrated, if necessary, in response to a temperature stabilization of the integrated optical circuit to approximately 0.1° C.

The embodiment illustrated in FIG. 4 shows a monolithically integrated solution, in which the optical module **101**, the light source **110**, the detector element **120** and the evaluation control unit **180** are embodied on the same substrate and are thermally coupled to a thermoelectric element **190**. The “input gate” and the “output gate”, respectively, of the optical module are strip waveguides that optically connect the directional coupling element to a light source **110** or a detector element **120**, respectively.

FIGS. 5A to 5D refer to embodiments of a spatial filter element **136**.

In the embodiment according to FIG. 5B, the emission of higher waveguide modes takes place by means of a single curve in the strip waveguide **136a**. The strip waveguide **136b** comprises a highly curved waveguide section comprising two curves in opposite direction, forming, for example, a semi-circle. Such a twice curved waveguide section suppresses the guidance of higher modes.

FIG. 5C refers to an exemplary embodiment, in which a strip waveguide **136c** includes a section comprising a constriction **136d**. The course of the constriction follows a mathematical function, which allows for the base modes to pass virtually undamped.

FIG. 5D refers to a spatial filter element **136** comprising a multimode interference area (MMI structure) **136g** with different conductor widths for the strip waveguide **136e** on the input side and the strip waveguide **136f** on the output side.

According to an embodiment, the integrated optical circuit encompasses exactly one of the optical modules **101** comprising a directional coupling element **130**, a phase modulator unit **150** and a decoupling element **160**. An integrated optical circuit comprising exactly one of such optical modules **101** is suitable for measuring direct current or alternating current in exactly one conductor.

According to the embodiment of FIG. 6, the integrated optical circuit **100** comprises three (or more) optical modules with an identical profile. Each optical module comprises a directional coupling element, for example a waveguide combining element **132**, a polarization element **134**, a spatial filter element **136** and a waveguide branching element **138**, as well as a phase modulator unit comprising, for example, a first modulator unit **151** assigned to a first strip waveguide **141**, and a second modulator unit **152** assigned to a second strip waveguide **142**, as well as a waveguide coupling element **160** for coupling the first and the second strip waveguide **141**, **142** to an optical fiber line **202**. A detector element **120a**, **120b**, **120c**, which is optically coupled to a respective output gate, is assigned to each output gate of the optical modules **101**. In contrast, the input gates of the three optical modules are coupled to the same light source **110** via, for example, a 1:3 waveguide branching element **114/116**.

According to an embodiment, provision is made between the light source **110** and the 1:3 waveguide branching element **114/116** for an additional polarization element **112**. For example, the 1:3 waveguide branching element **114/116** consists of a first beam splitter **114**, which divides an optical input signal at a ratio of 67%:33%, and of a second beam splitter **116**, which evenly distributes the 67% output signal of the first beam splitter **114** to the two strip waveguides on the output side. The light source **110** and the detector elements **120a**, **120b**, **120c** can either be monolithically integrated on the same substrate, on which the optical module are also integrated. According to another embodiment, they are processed on separate chips and are optically coupled to the optical module **101**.

FIG. 7 shows an embodiment of a measuring device **201** for measuring in a three-phase system comprising three live conductors **900a**, **900b**, **900c** by means of the integrated optical circuit **100** of FIG. 6. The setup is analogous to the setup shown in FIG. 1B. One of the optical modules of the optical circuit **100** is assigned to each of the live conductors **900a**, **900b**, **900c**.

FIG. 8 refers to a further embodiment for an integrated optical circuit comprising three substantially similar optical modules for measuring currents in three-phase systems. The embodiment is based on a 1:3 divider **113**, which distributes the signal of the light source **110** to the three input gates of the three optical modules. All of the strip waveguides are nanowaveguides, for example, in which only one of the two linearly polarized independent modes can expand, so that integrated optical polarizers are not longer necessary. Each of the optical modules encompasses a 2:2 directional coupler **139a**, **139b**, **139c**, which in each case guides an optical signal at a first gate of a first gate pair to a first and a second gate of a second gate pair and optical signals at the gates of the second gate pair to the second gate of the first gate pair. The power divider can be designed as MMI coupler (multi-mode interference coupler). The embodiment avoids waveguide crossings. The light source **110** and the detector elements **120a**, **120b**, **120c** can either be integrated monolithically or produced separately and coupled optically to the optical modules. The integrated optical circuit **100** is thermally coupled to a thermoelectric element, which is controlled such that the

integrated optical circuit can be operated with a deviation from the operating temperature of less than 0.1° C.

FIG. 9 is a flow chart of a method for measuring current on the basis of the Faraday effect by means of an integrated optical circuit. In the integrated optical circuit, a first and a second optical polarized signal are transmitted to a waveguide coupling element (**902**) via a first or a second strip waveguide, respectively. The first and the second optical signal are coupled to an optical fiber line of a measuring head (**904**) via the waveguide coupling element, wherein the optical signal, which can be transmitted via the second strip waveguide, is coupled to a different polarization mode of the optical fiber line than the first optical signal. The optical signal, which is reflected by the measuring head, includes two optical partial signals having a different polarization. The first optical partial signal is coupled into the first strip waveguide on the waveguide coupling element and the second optical partial signal is coupled into the second strip waveguide (**906**), wherein the polarization is rotated reciprocally. The two optical partial signals, which are obtained from the reflected signal, have the same polarization in the two strip waveguides and encompass a phase shift relative to one another that corresponds to the intensity of a magnetic field to which the measuring head is subjected. The phase difference is detected (**908**) and a conclusion is drawn to the intensity of current from the phase difference.

According to an embodiment, the phase difference between the first and the second optical signal is regulated to a predetermined value by means of a phase modulator.

While the invention is presented with reference to a presently-preferred embodiment, it is not limited thereto. Rather, this invention is limited only insofar as it is described in the following patent claims and includes within its scope all equivalents thereof.

What is claimed is:

1. An integrated optical circuit for measuring current on the basis of the Faraday effect, comprising at least one optical module, which encompasses:

- a first strip waveguide of a semiconductor material;
- a second strip waveguide of the semiconductor material;
- a waveguide coupling element, which is suitable for coupling a first optical signal from the first strip waveguide and a second optical signal from the second strip waveguide to an optical fiber line, wherein the same polarization modes of the first and second optical signal are coupled to different polarization modes of the optical fiber line and optical signals from the optical fiber line are coupled to first and second strip waveguide as a function of the polarization mode;
- a directional coupling element, which is suitable to couple an optical input signal at an input gate to the first and the second strip waveguide and to couple optical signals from the first and second strip waveguide to an output gate;
- a first optical signal path between the directional coupling element and the waveguide coupling element, comprising the first strip waveguide; and
- a second optical signal path between the directional coupling element and the waveguide coupling element, comprising the second strip waveguide, wherein an optical distance of the second optical signal path deviates from that of the first optical signal path, so that an interference contrast of the optical signals in the waveguide coupling element as compared to the identical distance is reduced by at least 50%.

2. The integrated optical circuit according to claim 1, characterized by a controllable phase modulator device, which is

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suitable to impact a phase between the same polarization modes of the first and of the second optical signal.

3. The integrated optical circuit according to claim 2, characterized in that the phase modulator device comprises exactly one modulator unit, which is assigned to one of the two strip waveguides.

4. The integrated optical circuit according to claim 2, characterized in that the phase modulator device comprises a modulator unit, which acts on the first optical signals, and a second modular unit, which acts on the second optical signal.

5. The integrated optical circuit according to claim 1, characterized in that a difference of the optical distance in the first and second optical signal path is dimensioned such that the interference contrast of the optical signals in the waveguide coupling element is substantially zero.

6. The integrated optical circuit according to claim 1, characterized in that the directional coupling element comprises:

- a waveguide combining element, which is suitable to couple optical signals at the input gate to a third strip waveguide and to couple an optical signal from the third strip waveguide to the output gate; and

- a waveguide branching element, which is suitable to couple an optical signal from the third strip waveguide to the first and second optical signal path and to couple optical signals from the first and second optical signal path to the third strip waveguide.

7. The integrated optical circuit according to claim 6, characterized in that the directional coupling element comprises a spatial filter element, which is suitable to emit higher waveguide modes.

8. The integrated optical circuit according to claim 6, characterized in that the spatial filter element is embodied as curve or cross sectional change of the third strip waveguide.

9. The integrated optical circuit according to claim 6, characterized in that the directional coupling element comprises an integrated optical polarization element.

10. The integrated optical circuit according to claim 1, characterized by

- exactly one optical module,
- a light source, which is coupled to the directional coupling element via the input gate, and

- a detector element, which is coupled to the directional coupling element via the output gate and which is suitable to output phase information, which describes a phase relationship between the polarization modes of the optical signals, which are coupled into the first and second strip waveguide by the optical fiber line.

11. The integrated optical circuit according to claim 10, characterized by an evaluation and control unit, which, based on the phase information, is suitable to control the phase modulator device such that the phase between the polarization modes of the optical signals, which are coupled in the first and second strip waveguide by means of the optical fiber line, does not deviate from a predetermined value.

12. The integrated optical circuit according to claim 1, characterized by exactly three or more optical modules.

13. The integrated optical circuit according to claim 12, characterized by

- a light source, which is coupled to the input gates of the optical modules via strip waveguide and waveguide branches, and

- at least three detector elements, which are coupled to the output gates of the optical modules, wherein each detector element is suitable to output phase information, which describes a phase relationship between the polarization modes of the optical fiber line, which is assigned

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to the respective optical module, in the first and second strip waveguide of the optical signal coupled into the respective optical module.

14. The integrated optical circuit according to claim 12, characterized by an evaluation and control unit, which, based on the phase information, is suitable to control the phase modulator devices in the respective optical modules such that a phase difference between the polarization modes of the optical fiber line, which is assigned to the respective optical module, in the optical signals, which are coupled into the respective first and second strip waveguides, does not deviate from a respective predetermined value.

15. The integrated optical circuit according to claim 10, characterized in that the light source is monolithically integrated in the optical circuit.

16. The integrated optical circuit according to claim 10, characterized in that the evaluation and control unit is monolithically integrated in the optical circuit.

17. A sensor module characterized by an integrated optical circuit according to claim 1, and a thermoelectric element, which is thermally coupled to the integrated optical circuit.

18. A measuring device for measuring current on the basis of the Faraday effect, comprising an integrated optical circuit according to claim 1, or a sensor module according to claim 17 and a magnetic field-sensitive fiber-optical sensor head, which is suitable for coupling to the waveguide coupling element.

19. An integrated optical circuit for measuring current on the basis of the Faraday effect, comprising at least one optical module, which encompasses:

- a first strip waveguide of a semiconductor material;
- a second strip waveguide of the semiconductor material;
- a waveguide coupling element, which is suitable for coupling a first optical signal from the first strip waveguide and a second optical signal from the second strip waveguide to an optical fiber line, wherein the same polarization modes of the first and second optical signal are coupled to different polarization modes of the optical fiber line and optical signals from the optical fiber line are coupled to first and second strip waveguide as a function of the polarization mode,
- wherein the waveguide coupling element comprises a grating integrally formed in the semiconductor material.

20. An integrated optical circuit for measuring current on the basis of the Faraday effect, comprising at least one optical module, which encompasses:

- a first strip waveguide of a semiconductor material;
- a second strip waveguide of the semiconductor material;
- a waveguide coupling element, which is suitable for coupling a first optical signal from the first strip waveguide and a second optical signal from the second strip waveguide to an optical fiber line, wherein the same polarization modes of the first and second optical signal are coupled to different polarization modes of the optical fiber line and optical signals from the optical fiber line are coupled to first and second strip waveguide as a function of the polarization mode;

- a directional coupling element, which is suitable to couple an optical input signal at an input gate to the first and the second strip waveguide and to couple optical signals from the first and second strip waveguide to an output gate;

- a first optical signal path between the directional coupling element and the waveguide coupling element, comprising the first strip waveguide; and

- a second optical signal path between the directional coupling element and the waveguide coupling element,

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comprising the second strip waveguide, wherein an optical distance of the second optical signal path deviates from that of the first optical signal path.

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